St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church Wedding Guidelines



Your marriage in the Catholic Church calls you to be a visible sign of Christ's Love to the World.



Dear Beloved Engaged Couples,

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church congratulates you on your engagement and welcomes the opportunity to help you carefully prepare for your upcoming wedding. The information in this packet covers the requirements of the parish and the Diocese of St. Petersburg. We hope outlining what is expected will assist you in making your special day go smoothly.

Please read through the information. If you have not already done so, please contact Meghan Snyder, Administrative Assistant, at 727-273-8600 x 110 to begin the wedding process.

It will be an honor to assist you in making your wedding day beautiful and to help prepare you for a life-long marriage of love and happiness! God bless you.

In His Love,

Fr. Eric Peters, Pastor Fr. George Varkey, MST Associate Pastor

Marriage Preparation Guidelines

To marry in the Catholic Church, either the bride *or* groom must be a practicing Roman Catholic and registered at a parish. The Catholic Church requires six months of premarital preparation. Here is what to expect during this time of preparation for your special day:

Premarital Inventory (PMI): You will complete a premarital inventory at your first meeting with the priest. This inventory rates the couple's compatibility on many issues, such as interests and activities, role expectations, personal adjustment to marriage, etc. Once the parish has received the inventory results, the priest will contact you to schedule another meeting to discuss the results.

Premarital Investigation: At your first meeting, the priest will give you a premarital investigation form which must be completed and returned to the parish office promptly. If you do not receive one at your meeting, please call Meghan at the parish office, and she will mail it to you.

Witness Forms: Please contact Meghan at the parish office to give her the names and addresses of four names (two for the bride and two for the groom) to serve as witnesses to attest to your freedom to marry. These should be people you have known for a long time. Meghan will contact the witnesses to have them fill out a freedom to marry form. This differs from the witnesses (Maid/Maiden of Honor and Best Man) who will witness your wedding vows on your wedding day.

Wedding Scheduling: Your wedding date will be scheduled only when we have received the premarital investigation and have found you free to marry. Only one wedding can be scheduled on any day. If the date you desire already has a wedding scheduled, you must pick a different date.

Meeting with a Sponsor Couple: After your second meeting, you will be contacted to schedule a one-time appointment with our sponsor couple. They are available to meet you at the parish office on Thursdays. This is an excellent opportunity to meet with another married couple who can share their wisdom from many years of marriage.

Pre-Cana Preparation: As part of your marriage

preparation, each couple must attend a Pre-Cana marriage preparation program. Brochures are enclosed for your information. The fees are listed in the brochures. Please look at the dates and decide on a date that is good for you and register as soon as possible, even if the date is a long way off; this helps to ensure your spot at the retreat. You will be given a certificate of completion after the program. Please bring or email a <u>copy</u> of that certificate to Meghan at the parish office for your file. (meghan@stanpr.org)

Baptismal Certificates: You must provide a recent copy of your baptismal certificates issued from your church of baptism and signed/dated within six months of the wedding date. You must tell the church that you are requesting this certificate for marriage and that you need to have the certificate with notations. If you are not Catholic but are baptized, please present a baptismal certificate from that church. If no certificate is available, please submit a letter from a parent or family member who can attest to your baptism, mainly because they were present for it. If circumstances exist other than those mentioned here, please discuss them with the priest or deacon preparing you.

Marriage License: Up to 60 days before the date of your wedding, a marriage license must be obtained. You must bring the license to the rehearsal, which the priest will take from you. After the wedding, the priest will sign the license, along with the best man and maid/maiden of honor. The parish office will mail it to the county courthouse to be processed. Your church of baptism will also be notified that you received the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Please remember this to avoid embarrassment on the date of your wedding. If you fail to present your marriage license either at your rehearsal or on the day of your wedding, the priest assigned to your wedding will not be able to witness the ceremony, i.e., you will not be getting married on that day. So please make a note to obtain this most important document. If your marriage is being convalidated, a copy of the original marriage license must be in your wedding file.

Wedding Fees: The wedding fee for registered parishioners is \$500 and \$650 for non-parishioners. The fee must be paid two weeks before your wedding. Checks should be made payable to St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church and either dropped off or mailed to Meghan Snyder, St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church, 8320 Old County Road 54, New Port Richey, FL 34653. If you are only being prepared for marriage at St. Thomas Aquinas and getting married in another parish, the fee is \$200. If the cost poses an undue financial burden, please discuss it with the priest preparing you.



Music Guidelines

Please contact Dan O'Hara, our Music Director, at least three months before your wedding date. He will meet with you to plan a beautiful wedding based on the Church's standards for music and liturgical celebrations. He can be reached at 727-372-8600 x128 or email him at danoharaatsta@gmaill.com.

For helpful information regarding Catholic engagement and marriage, visit the website www.foryourmarriage.org/.



Liturgy Guidelines: Liz Sheridan is our parish sacristan and coordinates liturgy at St. Thomas. Liz will meet with you about three months before the wedding to go over the ideas you have for your wedding and will create your wedding liturgy. Please call her to schedule an appointment. Below are guidelines for liturgy purposes. If you have any questions, please contact Liz at 727-372-8600 x129 or email Elizabeth@stanpr.org.

Photography/Videography: Photographs/ videos may be taken; however, flash photography is not permitted during the marriage ceremony. The photographer must be set up in one place and work so as to not to disturb the congregation or the priest. The photographer may not enter the sanctuary or be on the sanctuary steps any time during the celebration. The photographer and the bridal party have a half hour to complete any pictures taken after the ceremony has ended. If the photographer has questions, contact Liz Sheridan at x129.

Wedding Decorations: For insurance reasons, we cannot permit aisle runners, arches, throwing flower petals in the aisle, and throwing rice or birdseed inside or outside the church as these things can cause people to slide, trip, and fall.

We have candles in our sanctuary; therefore, no other candles are needed. If a Unity Candle is desired, please speak with Liz Sheridan, our parish Sacristan. Bows and ribbons may be tied to the pews. If tape is used, it needs to be blue painter's tape.

If you would like, you may leave any of your flowers in the church for weekend Masses. Please inform the florist that the church will be open ninety minutes before the wedding starts.

It is the responsibility of the wedding party to remove anything that has been brought into the church, except the flowers, so that the church will be ready for our Masses later that day.



Notes